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ABSTRACT

Designing a senior seminar as a "capstone" course for English majors provided an educator the opportunity to devise a course that might provide the majors and anyone who teaches the course an experience of what Paulo Freire calls "liberatory education." According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) the course should "round out" English students' program of study and enable them to "integrate the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the 4 years of study" in the English program. On the most fundamental pedagogical level, the course should enable both the instructor and the students to act as subjects in the educational process, to become "critical co-investigators in dialogue" pursuing a problem-posing education to develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves. The course would invite students into the debates engaged in as professionals. The two major objectives for the course are to invite students of language, writing, and literature to participate in the theoretical debates surrounding the study of English and, secondly, to afford each student the opportunity to pursue a semester-long research project culminating in a senior essay focusing on an interest the student has developed during prior course work. The course would represent a collaborative effort between the student's faculty advisor and many other faculty members. (The course proposal, a list of suggested readings, and a course syllabus are appended.) (CR)

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ED 411 512

"What is English?": Developing A Senior "Capstone" Course for the English Major

> *Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of men [and women] as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of men [and women] in their relations with the world. … Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. … The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is … taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. … The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. … In problem-posing education men`[and women] develop their power to perceive critically* ***the way they exist*** *in the world* ***with which*** *and* ***in which*** *they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. … Problem-posing education … enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism. … The world--no longer something to be described with deceptive words--becomes the object of that transforming action by men [and women] which results in their humanization.*
>
> *Paulo Freire,* ***The Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

During my third year as a full-time member of the English profession, I was called upon at the eleventh hour (actually it was about 11:45) to design a senior seminar as a "capstone" course for the English major in the department where I teach. A relative new-comer to the department, I was not a member of the Curriculum Committee initially charged with designing the course in response to a recommendation from The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in its assessment of the English major. According to the NCATE evaluators, the course should "round out" the English student's program of study and enable him or her to "integrate the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the four years of study" in the English major. What that was supposed to mean, in actual practice and, more importantly, from a theoretical and

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conceptual standpoint, none of us--myself least of all--seemed to know. We left it to the Curriculum Committee to untangle or hack through the Gordian knot bequeathed us by the national assessors as they departed into the miasma of academic bureaucracy. The committee did the best it could, given the general fogginess of the charge, to devise such a course. When the initial proposal came up for vote in a full department meeting, we began to envision, if not what the course should be, at least what it clearly should not be.

I remember, quite clearly, the day the proposal came up for a vote. A good friend and colleague, a relative new-comer to the department like myself, had the unenviable job of trying to explain to us what none of us seemed, as yet, to understand. The initial proposal called for a seminar, the purpose of which was to afford students the opportunity to work closely with a professional, in a more advanced scholarly way, in English studies. "So far, so good," I thought, not having had time to emerge long enough from the sea of work that engulfs all of us to consider philosophically and practically what the course should be. (I need to add parenthetically here that all of us, including the members of the committee, teach a four-course per semester load, encompassing graduate courses, writing courses, general introductions to literature, and more specialized courses in our so-called specialties; we advise at least a dozen students; pull our load on several committees on the department, College of Arts and Sciences, and university levels; work, as best we can, on our own scholarship and writing; and attempt, in any spare moments wrenched from our work days, to keep alive as professionals conversant in the important theoretical issues that characterize the discipline today, including the vexed question: "What is English?" But when my friend explained the content of the proposed course, something seemed not quite right. The content of the course was to be contingent upon the instructor's interests:

whatever he or she wanted the students to study in a given semester, the exact content varying, presumably quite widely, depending upon the teacher. Now this seemed to me curious content in a course that was somehow to embrace the many aspects of the discipline which our students had actually encountered over four years in a wide variety of courses. Our students study literature, still the privileged site of learning in our department as in most others, in a fairly traditional, but flexible, program requiring period and national literature courses, major author courses, genre courses, advanced technical or creative writing courses, and, in the case of our English Education students, courses in pedagogy. To put a capstone to all this diverse learning with a course that stressed only one aspect of the discipline, and would more than likely replicate in its conceptual framework and methodology only one of the literature courses, probably the major authors offering, seemed to me . . . well . . . curious.

I suggested that the course, as proposed, didn't seem to me as though it would help our students integrate their learning in the discipline, although, by now, I think we were all beginning to experience a sinking feeling whenever one of us used the term "our discipline"--whatever that might be. It seemed to evoke some private understanding for each of us. Of course we all know what the discipline is, and in order to design a culminating course in it we simply need to ... well ... that is to say, we just need to ... er ... The ever vexing question "What is English, anyway," loomed its Hydra head. After several thoughtful suggestions for revision from various members of the department, each of which met carefully reasoned objections from various other members of the department, we knew what the course should not be, or at least we had a sense of some of the forms it should not take. Very well, then, the Curriculum Committee decided, maybe I could work on a proposal, keeping in mind the department's thinking. I had, as I recall, two weeks to

redesign the course, submit it to the Curriculum Committee, make any necessary revisions before gaining the committee's approval, and bring it to the department once again. I had no idea where to begin, a happy circumstance, for whenever that happens I find I have no where else to go except back to my most fundamental grounding principles as a teacher. And this brings me back to Paulo Freire, whose words I invoked at the beginning of this piece.

Early in my graduate student teaching, I had the privilege of studying Freire's pedagogical theories with some of my own former students, who were preparing to spend two years of their lives working in the favellas of Brazil or the sprawling urban ghettoes (what's the right word?) of Chile. The learning that we did together has profoundly influenced my own teaching; it provided me with a set of principles that ground all my thinking about teaching, in whatever discipline. Designing the Senior Seminar provided me the opportunity to devise a course, from the ground up, that might provide all of our majors and anyone who teaches the course an experience of what Freire calls "liberatory education." I tried to envision the course in such a way as to invite, though not compel, faculty and students to engage in this kind of pedagogical practice. On the most fundamental pedagogical level, then, I wished the course to enable both the instructor and the students to act as subjects in the educational process, to become, in Freire's words, "critical co-investigators in dialogue" pursuing a "problem-posing education" in order to "develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves." And the world with which and in which they find themselves, as students of English, at any rate, is the world of our English major: the courses they have studied, the knowledge they have amassed, and the skills they have developed.

As justification (d) for course states, Eng. 499, Senior Seminar, would encourage the student to reflect critically on the discipline of English, the educational process, and his or her own educational experiences (Appendix 1). The course would help students reflect back upon their educational experiences in an attempt to help us develop a critical understanding of the discipline. In any given class, some students would have emphasized literary studies during their four years here; others would have concentrated in business and technical writing; others would have emphasized creative writing; still others would have focused their learning on English education. Their professional goals would be similarly diverse; and some (many?) would have no clear sense of where their education might take them in the future. The shared experiences, insights, and goals of such a diverse group would allow us a rich dialogue as we examine questions central to English Studies today, questions which I had assumed would have been touched upon in many of their courses, though not in a way that foregrounded them or attempted any kind of synthesis of the ways in which these questions are posed and answered.

The specific questions I had in mind were questions that I myself raise in my courses, that I knew a number of my colleagues raised, and that seemed to me to be the central issues of discussion in English Studies as I saw it currently moving. As the "Detailed Description of the Course Syllabus" indicates, these included questions concerning: textuality, meaning, institutional discursive practices, the politics of reading and interpretation, the relation of linguistic and literary study to culture and society, the political implications of pedagogical theory and practice (Appendix 1). In short the course would invite students into the debates that we all engage in as professionals. Since I was fairly new at Radford University, I didn't actually know what all my colleagues do in their courses, though I had a sense that this course might eventually encourage

all of us to ask some of these questions in our classes. So the course was as much my notion of an ideal capstone course for an ideal English major as it was a reflection of our present reality. Yet, I saw the course and our English major much as Freire sees the world, "not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" So, recognizing I could not presume to know what goes on in all our courses, I swallowed hard and proceeded. To provide students and teachers with a framework within which to engage together in a critical examination of these questions, the course would necessarily involve reading widely in the theory of language, literature, culture, and pedagogy. The purpose was not to indoctrinate students to any one point of view, but to invite them into the sometimes discordant, always lively, discussions that are shaping English studies. My hope in including opposing voices was to enable both students and teachers to begin or continue their own theorizing about the study of English. Somewhere in this welter of voices, we all might articulate our own theoretical positions from which to examine critically what we do as students of English.

In this way, working from fundamental pedagogical considerations to more specific questions about the study of English and the English major here at Radford, I arrived at the first of two major objectives for the course: "to invite students of language, writing, and literature to participate in the theoretical debates surrounding the study of English." The course should help students and teachers to discuss the theoretical premises beneath the educational ground they had covered in their courses, to contextualize these premises within the theoretical debates within the discipline today, and to theorize, for themselves, what our discipline is all about, both as they have actually experienced it, and as they would like to see it in the future. Recognizing my own limitations as a specialist in English Renaissance Studies and Women's Literature, I enlisted the

help of the whole department to construct a list of suggested readings that would embrace a number of positions in the many facets of English Studies at Radford. Appendix 2 contains the titles suggested by the whole department as well as other, more recently published, texts pertinent to the course. As the introduction to the list states, the idea is to "represent a number of differing, sometimes discordant, voices within the discourse, not to advance a particular position." In fact, the idea behind the list was not to prescribe certain texts or to limit choices even to these titles, but to suggest possibilities, and to model a principle of selection--a point that, I'm afraid, the proposal did not make clearly enough, for some faculty whose integrity and judgment I deeply respect thought they detected a hidden agenda beneath the whole proposal. The principle of selection was quite simple: represent a number of views or "sides," if you will, so that students and teachers, reflecting critically upon the texts, engage in problem-posing education about English studies.

The second major objective of the course was to afford each student the opportunity to pursue a semester-long research project culminating in a senior essay focusing on an interest the student has developed during prior course work. I hoped this objective would also afford students and teachers an opportunity to engage in problem-posing education through dialogue. Depending on each student's interest, the projects might cover such areas as: the teaching of writing or literature, field research in business or technical writing, theories of creativity or the imagination, and literary studies. The research project and senior essay were intended to help students focus on some question of importance to them in their chosen field of inquiry, some question they wanted to answer about a writer, a literary work, a theoretical concept, or institutional practice they had studied in their earlier course work. Each student would choose a faculty member with

whom to work whose area of specialization was appropriate to the student's project. My hope was that this activity would afford students the opportunity to attain a scholarly level of researching, reading, thinking, and writing through close collaboration with a faculty member who was not actually teaching the seminar. The course itself, then, would represent a collaborative effort both between his or her chosen faculty advisor, and among many faculty members. As the "Detailed Description and Course Syllabus" indicates (Appendix 1), the project would involve collaborative learning activities including: shared field work; hands-on work in the library; research and writing group work during which students could discuss their projects as they develop, review each other's proposals and progress reports, and read each other's drafts. Roughly 1/3 of instructional time would be devoted to research methodology so that students could learn or refine the skills required of them to bring their projects to fruition.

Whether this course, or any course taught within the institutional constraints we all know so well, can ever approximate Freire's ideal of a liberatory education; whether we, through our relationships with our students, can ever develop the perception that the world is the object of our transforming action and we are all subjects capable of greater humanization as we turn our consciousness actively and lovingly upon the world to change it, remains to be seen. Appendix 3 contains the actual course design of one section of the Senior Seminar that I recently taught. The experience of one student whose research project I directed in another course suggests how English Studies can help students achieve the praxis--the kind of reflection and action--that Freire envisioned as the proper end of education. His story mirrors that of other students in the course for almost without exception students use the course as an opportunity to connect their university experiences with their own most pressing concerns about the actual world in which they live and

of which the university is a crucial part. The student to whom I refer chose a project that involved him in researching gay and lesbian literature and theory, the range of concerns in teaching gay and lesbian literature, and the kinds of courses actually taught by some of today's most prominent theorists and teachers of gay and lesbian literature with whom he corresponded during his work. His purpose was to design a course that would dispel heterosexist notions about the experiences of gay males and lesbians and would introduce students to the works of gay and lesbian writers and film makers within a theoretical context most appropriate to this study. He was able to integrate his own personal and political commitments into his work and to establish a dialogue with other scholars who share these concerns. I learned much from him about gay male writers and theorists, and I hope he learned from the feminist theory, social constructionist theory, and knowledge of lesbian theory and literature that I was able to share with him. Though educational funding for him looks bleak right now, he hopes to pursue advanced study and someday teach his course. I hope he does. The world needs his transforming action.

APPENDIX 1: NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

ENGLISH 499: SENIOR SEMINAR

PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is two-fold: 1. to invite students of language, writing, and literature to participate in the theoretical debates surrounding the study of English; 2. to afford each student the opportunity to pursue a semester-long research project culminating in a senior essay which focuses on an interest the student has developed during prior course work.

NEED FOR COURSE

(a) Presently the English major offers no course which affords students the opportunity to integrate the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the four years of study. ENG 499 would serve as such a course.

(b) In its recent assessment statement, NCATE suggested the importance of a "cap stone" course to round out the English major's program of studies. ENG 499 would help the Department of English meet this objective.

(c) The inclusion of the senior essay would allow students to strive toward a scholarly level of achievement using the skills already acquired in prior course work.

(d) ENG 499 would encourage the student to reflect critically on the discipline of English, the educational process, and his or her own educational experiences.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF COURSE SYLLABUS

Theoretical readings (see attached suggested readings) are intended to help the student reflect critically on some questions that have emerged in the study of English: questions

concerning textuality, meaning, institutional discursive practices, the politics of reading and interpretation, the relation of linguistic and literary study to culture and society, the political implications of pedagogical theory and practice, etc.

The research project and senior essay are intended to help the student refine research and reading skills in the discipline, analytic and synthetic thinking skills, and writing skills. These tasks are intended to afford the student the opportunity to attain a scholarly level of researching, reading, thinking, and writing. The senior essay will be evaluated by the teacher of record for the course and one outside reader whose area of specialization is appropriate to the student's subject. Students will be encouraged to consult outside specialists during completion of their projects. A third reader will be asked to evaluate the essay should the first two readers disagree in their evaluations.

Depending upon the instructor, the specific course procedures and particular assigned theoretical readings will vary in the pursuit of the above objectives. There are many routes to these same objectives, as many as there are instructors. The following is a *possible*, by no means mandatory, model for such a course.

MODEL COURSE DESIGN

The course will meet once a week for three hours. Learning activities through which students critically engage the readings will constitute roughly 2/3 of each class period. This portion of the class period will use a variety of strategies to engage students as teacher/learners: student-led seminar discussions of the readings; panel presentations on one or two selections; sharing of written reflections about the readings; writing dialogical responses to other students' reflections; creative responses to the readings such as dramatizations, debates or video

productions. The other 1/3 of the class period could be devoted to activities intended to bring the research project to fruition: discussion of scholarly habits and methods (perhaps a few readings would help here); collaborative learning activities; "hands-on" work in the library; instruction in the use of Internet and other electronic research resources; research/writing group work during which students can discuss their projects as they develop, review each other's proposals and progress reports, and read each other's drafts.

Though collaborative work in the research projects could present a logistical problem, it seems likely that the students could organize themselves into research interest groups embracing broad interests, such as: composition theory and the teaching of writing, research in technical and business writing, research in the teaching of literature, earlier British literature, later British literature, American literature (possibly an earlier and later group here too), women writers, ethnic literature, cultural studies. (Depending on the interests that emerge from the class, these research interest groups could be more narrowly focused.) With such organization, students in specific research interest groups could share with each other what they are learning about the major research tools and resources in their area. They could share proposals and drafts with other students whose interests lie in a related area. At the mid-term and at the completion of the project and essay, each student could present a report on the state of his or her research and the process s/he followed in framing and testing an hypothesis.

APPENDIX 2

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR ENG. 499

This list is meant to suggest possibilities, not limit choices; the idea is to represent a number of differing, sometimes discordant, voices within the discourse not to advance a particular position. Students might read only selections from these texts, not the full works.

Altieri, Charles. *Canons and Consequences*
Apple, Michael. *Ideology and Curriculum*
Alter, Robert. *Reading in an Ideological Age*
Bennett, William J. *The De-Valuing of America*
Bloom, Alan. *The Closing of the American Mind*
Booth, Wayne C. *Critical Understanding: The Limits of Pluralism*
Connell, R. W., et al., *Making the Difference: Schools, Families, and Social Division*
D'Souza, Dinesh. *Illiberal Education*
Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory*
Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader*
Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in this Class?*
Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader* and/or *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*
Freire, Paulo. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
Frye, Northrop. *The Educated Imagination*
Graff, Gerald. *Literature Against Itself* and/or *Professing Literature*
Hayakawa, S. I. *Language in Thought and Action*
Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways With Words*
Himmelfarb, Gertrud. *The New History and the Old*
Hirsch, E. D. *A Philosophy of Composition* and/or *Cultural Literacy*
hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*
Kimball, Roger. *Tenured Radicals*
Kinneavy, James. *Theory of Discourse*
Knobloch, C. H. and Lil Brannon. *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*
Langar, Suzanne. *Mind: An Essay on Feeling*
Langland, Elizabeth and Walter Gove. *A Feminist Perspective in the Academy*
Lentricchia, Frank. *After the New Criticism* and/or *Criticism and Social Change*
Levine, Lawrence. *The Opening of the American Mind*
Macdonell, Diane. *Theories of Discourse*
Miller, Jim Wayne. "A Mirror for Appalachia." in *Voices from the Hills*
Ohmann, Richard. *English in America*
Postman, Neil. *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching*
Richter, David. *Falling into Theory*
Scholes, Robert. *Textual Power*

APPENDIX 3
COURSE SYLLABUS FOR SECTION OF ENG 499

Eng. 499-01 and 499-02: Senior Seminar
Instructors: Moira P. Baker (499-01) and Scott Christianson (499-02)
Office (Baker): 406 Young Office Phone: 831-5352 Home Phone: 731-4104
E-Mail: mpbaker@runet.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

D'Souza, Dinesh. Illiberal Education. New York: Free Press, 1991.

Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

---. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. Ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Routledge, 1988.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Levine, Lawrence. *The Opening of the American Mind*. New York: Beacon: 1996.

Richter, David. *Falling into Theory*. New York: St. Martin's, 1994.

Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Dolan. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Eds. Gerald Graff and Phelan. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to engage in the lively conversations and research activities shared by professionals in the discipline of English Studies today so that you will become a scholar of the discipline as well as a sophisticated researcher. The course is designed to help you not only become well-versed in a subject about which you are passionately concerned but also develop an awareness of how you position yourself as a scholar vis-a-vis the exciting discussions and debates that characterize our field. The course will be both like and unlike every other English course you have taken as an English major at Radford University. It will be similar in that we will be reading a variety of texts, discussing them, and researching and writing about them. It is also related to what we have done so far in the discipline of English because we will reflect back upon and analyze our past experiences in English courses, from freshman composition to sophomore literature to Shakespeare and Grammar to advanced literature, literary criticism, and writing courses.

The course will be unlike every other English course you have taken and other courses I teach because it will be *about* English, or English Studies. It will be a retrospective exploration of our experiences as teacher/learners in English at Radford University. Together we will attempt to understand the "discipline" of English as part of the larger academic institution of higher education--"the university," "academe"--of which "English" at RU and Radford University itself are specific "sites" of discipline.

Although we will be reading numerous texts which can be categorized as "theory" or "literary theory," this is not a "theory" or "lit. crit." course. By the same token, although we will be reading works of "literature," this is not a course in literature. One of the ways we will explore the discipline of English is by problematizing those tidy categories of courses and subjects on which we have come to rely. In studying the discipline of English, this course will challenge your assumptions about writing, learning, and knowledge.

This course is designed, then, as a "capstone" of your English major. You will discover, I hope, that you have always already been thinking about the discipline of English--even if you didn't know that was what you were doing. This capstone course aims to pull together and focus that thinking as a way of "capping" or rounding off your English education.

Another important way in which this course will serve as a capstone of your English major is by providing you the opportunity to engage in a semester-long scholarly research and writing project focusing upon any subject about which you have developed an interest during your course of study. Your project should help you not only enhance your expertise as a scholar but also situate your own work in a sophisticated and self-reflective way amid the philosophical cross-currents of the discipline today.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Dialogical Reading Logs (25% of Grade)

A two page **(minimum) typed** reading log will be due at the beginning of most seminar sessions. See syllabus for due dates. These logs should demonstrate that you have read, understood and thought about **all** the assigned reading for each evening. You need to nail down the thesis and supporting ideas for each selection and **respond, in a thoughtful and professional way**, to them. If possible, try to get at the hidden assumptions or unstated premises upon which the arguments for each piece rest and respond to them.

Each week you will share your log with a group of four students. You will also exchange your log with one member of that group so that before the next seminar session you can each write a brief (½ page or so) dialogical response in which you reflect upon the other student's log; your dialogical response is to be given to the other student on the next class meeting. Hence, you will engage in intensive dialogue with each other through the logs.

Scholarly Project (50% of Grade)

Each of you will conduct a scholarly research and writing project culminating in a final 10-20 page fully researched and documented essay on any topic of your choosing within the

discipline of English. Your final paper must be thoroughly researched and must demonstrate your engagement with the scholarship on your subject. It must follow correct MLA style for documentation and citation of your sources. You should use at least ten sources in your paper, including your primary text(s).

I urge you to seek out something you love--some interest that emerges from deep within you. It is my conviction that the best scholarship comes from those hidden depths within us where the things we most care about reside. The best scholarship is something we ***need*** to write.

You may focus your project on a favorite text or author, a problem or issue you have encountered in your study of English, a film adaptation of a literary text, an analysis of a film or the works of one director as "texts." You may engage in popular culture studies or cultural studies of a literary period that holds particular fascination for you. "High" culture or "low" (popular) culture; may be the subject of your research. You may bring your favorite critical perspective to bear upon a text or texts (e.g., new criticism, reader-response, feminism, deconstruction, post-colonial criticism, queer theory, peace studies criticism). You may wish to cross disciplinary boundaries, contextualizing your work with literature in other disciplines (e.g., social history, sociology, psychology, art history, music history, anthropology). If you are an English Education major, you may focus your project upon some aspect of education, the teaching of literature or writing in the schools, or curriculum development in view of new theories like feminism, post-colonial theory or queer theory. If you are interested in creative writing, you may concentrate your study on questions of technique or aesthetics. If you are interested in technical writing, you may research some question or issue in that field.

According to the topic you have chosen, you will select a project advisor from among English Department faculty, who will direct and help you with the research project. Your advisor should be someone with expertise in the topic area you have chosen; he or she need not be someone with whom you have already worked or taken a course. Your advisor will read and respond to your first draft, making suggestions for revision. He or she will also read and evaluate your project and communicate that evaluation to you and to me; I will also read and grade your project, attending to, but not bound by, your advisor's comments and evaluation.

I will be giving each of you a student/advisor contract which you will fill out with your advisor, and which both of you will sign as the agreement by which you will work together. You and your advisor will determine how many times you will meet and when. **This contract is due, signed by you and your advisor, by the fourth session of the seminar. The working bibliography, two annotated bibliographies, first draft and final revision will be due on the dates stipulated on the syllabus.**

The scholarly project will reflect a process and consist of:

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

a 25 item typed bibliography encompassing several categories of texts pertinent to your study including: primary texts, secondary criticism,
theoretical works, and contextual materials or collateral areas. Will be typed in proper MLA form.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

two sets of 10 annotations, each analyzing and processing different readings from your working bibliography or other readings you found that are pertinent to your project. You should include annotations on texts drawn from each category of pertinent texts on your working bibliography. May be hand-written or typed. Must use proper MLA form.

FIRST DRAFT FOR ADVISOR AND PEER REVIEW

this should be a complete draft of your thinking through your material. It should be fully documented in proper MLA form including a works cited page.

FINAL DRAFT

this should be a full revision in view of your advisor's comments, your peer groups comments and any suggestions you may have got from others. It should be fully documented in proper MLA form including a works cited page.

Final Paper (25% of Grade)

As the culmination of your experience in the Senior Seminar, you will write a final paper, 15-20 pages, typed, in which you will formulate your own answer to the question, "What is English?" The paper should reflect upon the readings, discussions, dialogical log responses, and ideas generated in the Seminar as you articulate your vision of what "English" is--or should be. In shaping your own answer to the question you may also reflect upon your own experiences as a student of English.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Participation

In order to teach in the way that I feel is most effective, calling all of us to collaborate as teacher/learners, I must ask you to attend regularly and participate actively. If you aren't here, obviously you cannot accept your responsibility as both teacher and learner in this class. Without your attendance and your constructive work, this class cannot succeed. Your presence and contributions are both desired and required. They are so essential to this course, that I ask you to accept the following policy:

> You will be allowed to miss **one** class session without penalty. Beyond this, absences will seriously affect your final grade for the seminar. **If you miss more than two (2) seminar sessions, you will unconditionally fail the course.**

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

The University Affairs Council has asked all faculty to include the following statement in our course policies:

> "By accepting admission to Radford University, each student makes a commitment to understand, support, and abide by the University Honor Code without compromise or exception. Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. This class will be

conducted in strict observance of the Honor Code. Please refer to your Student Handbook for details."

Plagiarism, including the use of work submitted to another course without the consent of both instructors, the use of work by another person, or the use of someone else's words or ideas without giving proper reference to the author, is a serious violation of the Honor Code. Please see the section on plagiarism in your Student Handbook.

Submission of All Work by Due Date:

NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED. All logs must be submitted by the due date on the syllabus. If your research paper is late, to me or to your advisor, it will receive a grade of "F," which probably will mean an "F" for the Seminar. If the working bibliography, either of the two annotated bibliographies, the first draft, or the final essay is not submitted by the designated due date, it will receive a grade of "F."

Eng. 499: Senior Seminar
Baker and Christianson
Syllabus

1/8 Course Goals, Expectations, Procedures

Dialogical Reading Logs
Research Project: Expectations, Options
Working Bibliography

Brainstorming/Free writing/Invention: Choosing a Research Topic

Assignment for Next Week: Read Foucault, "The Function of Literature," "Practicing Criticism," "The Masked Philosopher," "The Minimalist Self," "An Aesthetics of Existence" (all in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*). Read Richter, pp. 1-43 ("Why We Read"; Vendler, "What We Have Loved, Others Will Love"; Graff, "Disliking Books at an Early Age." Prepare 2 page typed reading log. Label Log #1. See Course Description for expectations on logs.

1/15 **ON LITERATURE, CRITICISM, THE SUBJECT AND POWER**

Reading Log #1 Due

Discussion of Foucault, Richter, Vendler, Graff

Small Group Discussion of Possible Research Project Topics

Research Project: Finalizing a Research Topic

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Do some kinds of invention writing in order to finalize your selection of a research topic. List, cluster, free write--whatever works for you--but use writing to explore your thinking. Decide upon your research project topic.

2. Begin reading Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. By 1/29 read pp. 19-137; 227-240; 243-245; 313-356; 380-381 and prepare a 2 page typed reading log.

1/22 **Class Meets In McConnell Library**
Research Workshop: Working Bibliography, Bibliographic Tools, Electronic Research Resources

Primary Texts, Secondary Criticism, Collateral Area Scholarship

Assignments for Next Week: 1. Complete reading of required pages in Bloom. Prepare 2 page typed reading log. **SEE NEXT PAGE**

2. Begin 25 item working bibliography (Due 2/5)

1/29 **THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY AND HUMANISTIC LEARNING**

Log #2 Due

Contract with Research Project Advisor Due

Discussion of Bloom

Assignment for Next Week:

1. Complete 25 item working bibliography. Typed in correct MLA form.

2. Read Searle "The Storm over the University" (Richter, 80-88); Menand, "What Are Universities For?" (Richter, 88-100); Will, "Literary Politics" (Richter, 286-289); Greenblatt, "The Politics of Culture" (Richter, 289-290). Prepare a 2 page typed reading log.

2/5 **THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY AND HUMANISTIC LEARNING**

25 Item Working Bibliography Due. Typed in Correct MLA Form.

Log #3 Due

Discussion of Searle, Menand, Will and Greenblatt

Preparing an Annotated Bibliography

Assignment for Next Week:

1. Read Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*. Prepare a 2 page typed reading log.

2. Begin Annotated Bibliography. (10 item annotated bibliographies due on 2/19 and 3/5)

2/12 **THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY AND HUMANISTIC LEARNING**

Log #4 Due

Discussion of Levine

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Read Ohmann, "The Function of English at the Present Time" (Richter, 100-105); Eagleton, "The Rise of English" (Richter, 44-54). Prepare 2 page typed reading log. **SEE NEXT PAGE**

2. Complete 10 item annotated bibliography

2/19 **THE "DISCIPLINE" OF ENGLISH STUDIES: POWER, KNOWLEDGE, SOCIETY, CULTURE, THE SUBJECT**

10 Item Annotated Bibliography Due

Log #5 Due

Discussion of Ohmann and Eagleton

In-Class Writing to Explore Subject for Project in View of Research to Date

Assignment for Next Week:

1. Read Gates, "Canon Formation, Literary History, and the Afro-American Tradition" (Richter, 173-180); Sedgwick, from *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Richter, 183-186); Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (Richter, 187-192); Said, "The Politics of Knowledge" (Richter 193-203); Morrison, "Black Matter(s)" (Richter, 256-268). Prepare 2 page typed reading log.

2. Work on 10 item annotated bibliography. (Due 3/5)

2/26 **CANONS TO THE RIGHT/CANONS TO THE LEFT: THE CANON, INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES, LITERATURE, CULTURE, THE READING SUBJECT**

Log #6 Due

Discussion of Readings

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Read Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*, pp. vii-xxvi, 1-11, 72-100. Prepare 2 page typed reading log.

2. Complete 10 item annotated bibliography

3/5 **INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES AND THE READING SUBJECT**

Log #7 Due

10 Item Annotated Bibliography Due

Discussion of Readings
In-class writing to explore research project subject

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Continue preliminary invention writing to explore your subject. Try to move toward a clearer conception of what your want to argue in your piece--your thesis idea or main contention.

2. Begin working on first draft of research essay

3/12 **SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS. COMPLETE YOUR FIRST DRAFT OVER BREAK**

3/19 **First Draft of Research Essay Due to your Advisor by 5:00.**

First Draft Due in Class. Bring Three Xerox Copies for your Group

Writing Workshop: Peer Group Responses to Drafts

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Read *Taming of the Shrew* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Prepare 2 page typed log

2. Work on final revision of research essay

3/26 **INTERPRETING CANONICAL TEXTS**

Log #8 Due

Discussion of text

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Read assigned critical essays from *Huck Finn* anthology or Karen Newman essay on *Shrew* and assigned essays from *Shrew* anthology. Prepare 2 page typed log.

2. Work on final revision of research essay

4/2 **CRITICAL ISSUES IN INTERPRETING CANONICAL TEXTS**

Log #9 Due

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Complete final draft of research essay. Submit essay to advisor by 5:00 on 4/9.

4/9 **Final Revision of Research Essay Due to Advisor by 5:00 and to me by class time**

Viewing of *Taming of Shrew* or discussion of more critical issues surrounding Twain's novel

Assignments for Next Week:

1. Read hooks, 1-22; 111-118; Foucault, "Truth and Power," "What Is an Author?" (in *The Foucault Reader*); re-read Foucault, "The Minimalist Self," "An Aesthetics of Existence," "The Masked Philosopher" (in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*). Prepare a 2 page typed log.

4/16 **THE RETURN OF THE SUBJECT--AND THE AUTHOR**

Log #10 Due

Discussion of Readings

4/23 **WHAT IS ENGLISH?**

What Is English Paper Due

Sharing of Papers/Discussion